Saint Mary's Church, Gilroy

By Sydney Russ

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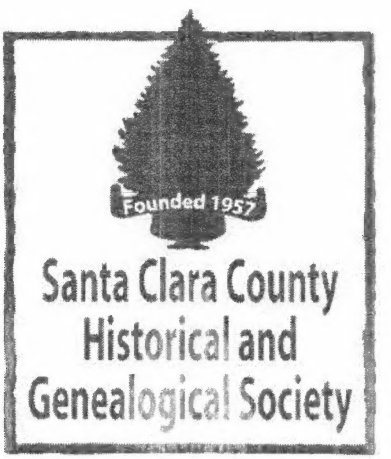
Notes:

- Original in possession of the Santa Clara County Archives, San Jose, California
- Scanned by the Santa Clara Historical and Genealogical Society



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ST. MARY'S CHURCH - GILROY

This church, originally located at Martinsville, now San Martin, about five miles north of Gilroy, was built in 1852 by Martin Murphy, Sr., and given to the Catholic Church, together with five acres of land, situated about three miles east of the Monterey Highway, on a prominent knoll, which commanded a marvelous view of the surrounding valley.

Until 1856 this church was under the jurisdiction of San Jose, at which time it was included in the San Jose district. In 1865 Gilroy was formed into a separate parish, under Father Hudson, who supervised the erection of a church on the northern edge of the present city of Gilroy, which was used until 1926 when the new handsome building was erected, the old church being remodeled inside for the use as a club house for the members of the parish.

The early records of the church, written in Latin in the old Spanish script, show the first baptism in the little church of St. Martin was administered to Martin J. C. Murphy, grandson of Martin Murphy, Sr. on June 29, 1852, and the first marriage that of William Welsh and Anastasia O'Toole, solemnized by Father De Vos on May 20, 1855.

The first baptism in St. Mary's Church, Gilroy, was the daughter of Edwin and Catherine Esworthy - (Emily Ann), and took place December 24, 1865, and the first marriage performed between William Jefferson and Mary Caulfield in February 1866.

In 1870 the convent was erected and a school started under the supervision of Sister Superior Raymonda Cumadell, and in 1872 Mrs. Dunn of San Jose donated five thousand dollars for the erection of a free boys' school, one thousand to be used for building purposes,

ST. MARY'S CHURCH - GILROY (Continued)

and the balance of four thousand for a resume fund. The convent and school are housed in the original buildings, and can be seen on the right of U. S. Highway 101 upon entering the city of Gilroy from the north.

Of the original church of St. Martin no visible trace remains, and none of the residents of San Martin have any recollection of the church or its exact location so far as the writer could ascertain.

St. Mary's Church was by no means the first church in the city of Gilroy, being preceded by several other denominations, but is the only one still using original buildings.